

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 5 April 1968



50X1

LATE ITEM

Soviet Union -
North Vietnam

The Soviets published a statement this morning saying that they "fully support the statement of the North Vietnamese Government on 3 April." In a summary which has been broadcast, Moscow says "the further development of events depends on whether the US will take the following step: whether it stops bombings and other acts of war against North Vietnam fully and unconditionally, and whether it takes a positive view of the well-known proposals of the North Vietnamese Government and the Liberation Front on the ways of settling the Vietnam problem." The statement says, "In the opinion of the Soviet Government, these proposals offer a good basis for a lasting settlement in Vietnam."

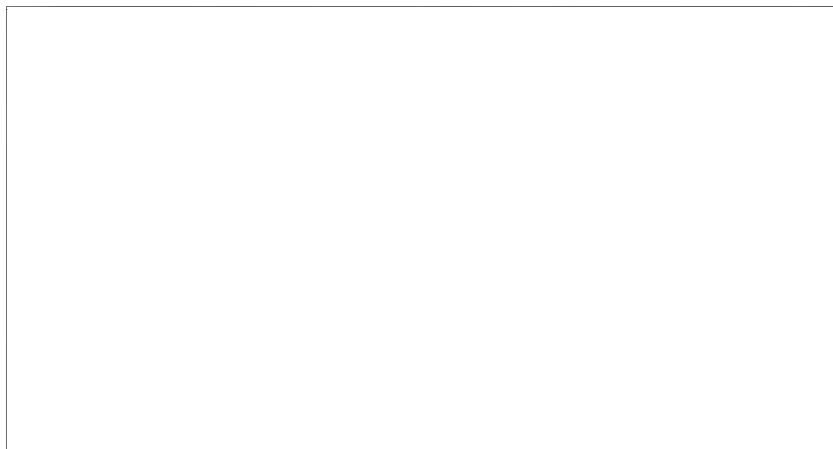
DAILY BRIEF
5 APRIL 1968

1. North Vietnam

There are no clear indications yet whether Hanoi intends to tailor its military action to prospective diplomatic "contacts" with the US. The relative lull in enemy military activity in South Vietnam continues. There are signs, however, of enemy reconnaissance, repositioning and logistic activity, possibly in preparation for a step-up in the pace of hostilities. Such action is particularly evident in the central highlands and along the central coast of South Vietnam.

2. South Vietnam

50X1



3. Panama

The Supreme Court last night nullified Robles' impeachment. This puts a real crimp in Arias' chances for the presidency. Some of the radicals behind Arias may well take to the streets now, but the guard is prepared to handle any new outbreaks of violence.

50X1

4. Jordan

King Husayn is settling for a trip to Cairo, and perhaps Baghdad, in place of the Arab summit meeting he had wanted. Husayn is scheduling a visit to Cairo for Saturday now that it is clear that Saudi King Faysal will not agree to a summit meeting unless Jordan and Egypt concede openly that Jarring has failed.

Husayn now must try to do two things: first, to get Nasir to show some flexibility toward Jarring's proposals; second, to get Nasir to help control the terrorist groups in Jordan. We doubt the King will have much success.

5. Poland

A purge of middle-level officials is now moving along in earnest. Recently ousted functionaries include a deputy minister of foreign trade and the head man of the nuclear energy program. Numerous party and government officials with lower rank have also been sacked.

Most of the victims are Jews who are traditionally the targets of party hardliners. The hardliners will lose no time seating their own choices behind the empty desks.

Reports from Warsaw say the next step--perhaps within the week--will be removals in the upper reaches of the government.

6. Czechoslovakia

The party central committee has elected a new leadership, and extensive government changes are expected to follow soon. Reformers within the party now have a heavy majority on the policy-making presidium and are well represented on the new secretariat, which executes policy. All the new leaders are presumably committed to party secretary Dubcek's action program.

7. Rumania

Large amounts of Soviet-made armor which the Israelis captured last summer have been bought by Rumania. Moscow has been reluctant to supply hardware to the unreliable Rumanians recently. That Bucharest has found a way around the problem is going to be especially irritating to the Russians.

Top Secret

Top Secret



FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



Top Secret

50X1

16

5 April 1968

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

5 April 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Comment on Johnson Speech: Hanoi radio's domestic service on 4 April carried a commentary giving for the first time an account of President Johnson's 31 March speech. It covered most of the main points, with some snide interpretative comments added for the benefit of the North Vietnamese populace. The broadcast reported the President's order stopping the bombing of North Vietnam "except in the area north of the demilitarized zone," but it failed to carry that part of the statement justifying the continuation of some bombing operations. It quoted the President's pledge of a full bombing halt in return for prompt and serious talks in which Hanoi would not take advantage of US restraint. The broadcast concluded by noting without direct comment that the President had announced he would not run for re-election.

* * *

More on 4 April Editorial: Further analysis of the editorial in Nhan Dan on 4 April suggests that although it sticks rigidly to basic North Vietnamese positions most of the time, some of the language could be designed to preserve tactical flexibility should this prove desirable in future contacts with the US.

Nhan Dan covers basically the same ground as the 3 April government statement. It elaborates on the point that President Johnson was forced to restrict the bombing because of military "failure" in Vietnam and rising opposition to US policy both at home and abroad. The editorial says the US "remains obstinate," however, and cites continued bombings up to the 20th parallel, reconnaissance flights "in every part of North Vietnam," and the President's statements about sending more US troops and keeping commitments to Saigon as evidence of this attitude.

The issue of reciprocal military restraint is treated more fully than in the 3 April government statement. The editorial does not specifically rule out Communist restraint in the future, although it does complain that despite continued bombing and strengthening of US and South Vietnamese forces, the US keeps asking the Communists to "slacken their fight against aggression." The editorial says that a demand for Communist reciprocity in return for a bombing halt and for setting conditions for a US troop withdrawal is still the "essence" of the US position. This, it says, "has been categorically rejected" by the Vietnamese Communists.

* * *

Liberation Front on US-Hanoi Exchange: The Liberation Front in two separate broadcasts has carried the text of the 3 April Hanoi government statement. On 4 April the Liberation radio broadcast a 15-minute commentary which voiced "full support for the just stand and good will of the North Vietnamese Government" as expressed in its 3 April statement. The commentary criticized President Johnson's 31 March speech, calling it "shamelessly pre-arranged" and a "manifestation of the aggressive and cunning" propaganda of the US imperialists. The commentary termed President Johnson's stand as that of "a stubborn aggressor."

Citing the recent bombing of North Vietnam and spy flights by US planes over North Vietnam, the commentary said that President Johnson's speech was an attempt to conceal the US imperialists' "dark scheme of pursuing their aggression and domination of South Vietnam." It concluded that as long as the US imperialists do not give up their scheme of aggression against South Vietnam, the Vietnamese people will "never put down their weapons" and "will resolutely fight until complete victory."

* * *

North Vietnamese Spokesman in London: A North Vietnamese correspondent in London, Nguyen Van Sao, appeared on a BBC television program on 4 April to claim that Hanoi's stated willingness to talk with

US officials was "just the beginning...to test Mr. Johnson's sincerity." Sao is not a prominent official, and his views may not carry much weight, but he claims that his statements were cleared with Hanoi's Paris office and in addition had been sent back to Hanoi.

In his TV appearance, he was unusually garrulous for a North Vietnamese spokesman. In addition to the usual line about talks starting after an unconditional bombing cessation, Sao volunteered that such talks could be held in a "matter of days" in Paris, Phnom Penh, or Poland. He also said that the talks would be restricted to North Vietnamese and American representatives and would be held at the ambassadorial level.

* * *

Hanoi Plays Up Continuing Air Raids: To bolster its case for an unconditional end to the bombing throughout all of North Vietnam, Hanoi is providing detailed reporting on what it claims are continuing, intensive, and "inhumane" US air raids on the provinces south of the 20th parallel. It has coupled these reports with replays of statements in the Western press criticizing the US for ordering only a partial bombing halt and urging that the cessation include the entire country.

In broadcasts on 3 and 4 April, Hanoi listed a number of areas in the southern provinces which it claimed have received intensive bombings since the President's announcement of the bombing halt. Particular attention was focused on charges that these raids were directed against populated areas. The broadcasts also condemned the use of reconnaissance aircraft over provinces north of the 20th parallel and an alleged bombing of a populated area in a northwestern province near the Laotian border, far above the 20th parallel. Ambassador Sullivan says it is unlikely that US or Laotian planes were operating in this area. He suggests the possibility of a Chinese provocation.

* * *

50X1

50X1
50X1

* * *

Liberation Front Office in Sweden: Recent Vietnamese Communist contacts with the Swedish Government have apparently resulted in an agreement to allow the Liberation Front to open an office in Stockholm. According to a 3 April Radio Sweden broadcast, the Front will open an information office in the Swedish capital in the next few months, and its representatives are looking for quarters in the city.

The new office could become a clearing house for Vietnamese Communist propaganda throughout Scandinavia and Western Europe. In addition, it doubtless would minister to the burgeoning Vietnam movement in Sweden. This is the second agreement for establishing a Front press office in Western Europe in recent months. The Front received approval for such an office in France, but it has never been opened.

* * *

50X1

* * *

50X1

50X1

* * *

Bo Uninformed of Hanoi's Intent: Mai Van Bo, the leading North Vietnamese diplomat in the West and a very authoritative spokesman on the negotiations issue, apparently did not anticipate either the nature or the promptness of his government's response to President Johnson.

50X1

According to the US Embassy in Paris, Bo [redacted] told French Foreign Ministry officials that he did not put much stock in President Johnson's speech. He claimed it was made for domestic political reasons, and pointed out that the partial bombing restrictions did not meet Hanoi's requirement for full cessation. He also charged that the US was still sending reconnaissance planes north of the 20th parallel. Bo told the French that these actions would not obtain the desired result and that he personally believed that the North Vietnamese leaders would "not rush in- to any official reply."

50X1

50X1

II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

Top Secret